National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Urban environmental health hazards and health equity

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Abstract:

This paper outlines briefly how the living environment can affect health. It explains the links between social and environmental determinants of health in urban settings. Interventions to improve health equity through the environment include actions and policies that deal with proximal risk factors in deprived urban areas, such as safe drinking water supply, reduced air pollution from household cooking and heating as well as from vehicles and industry, reduced traffic injury hazards and noise, improved working environment, and reduced heat stress because of global climate change. The urban environment involves health hazards with an inequitable distribution of exposures and vulnerabilities, but it also involves opportunities for implementing interventions for health equity. The high population density in many poor urban areas means that interventions at a small scale level can assist many people, and existing infrastructure can sometimes be upgraded to meet health demands. Interventions at higher policy levels that will create more sustainable and equitable living conditions and environments include improved city planning and policies that take health aspects into account in every sector. Health equity also implies policies and actions that improve the global living environment, for instance, limiting greenhouse gas emissions. In a global equity perspective, improving the living environment and health of the poor in developing country cities requires actions to be taken in the most affluent urban areas of the world. This includes making financial and technical resources available from high-income countries to be applied in low-income countries for urgent interventions for health equity. This is an abbreviated version of a paper on "Improving the living environment" prepared for the World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health, Knowledge Network on Urban Settings.

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1891648

Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Extreme Weather Event, Temperature

Air Pollution: Ozone

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

Temperature: Extreme Heat

Geographic Feature: ☑

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Urban

Geographic Location: ☑

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Impact: ☑

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease, Morbidity/Mortality

Infectious Disease: Vectorborne Disease

Vectorborne Disease: Mosquito-borne Disease

Mosquito-borne Disease: Dengue

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: ☑

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

Resource Type: ☑

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Timescale: ☑

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified